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Martin H. Freeman And His Life At Liberia College: A Study In Irony

This was the only building of Liberia College when Martin Freeman arrived. It was far different from the brick building of Avery College in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, that Martin had left.

About the Author

Colin Alfred was a 2011 graduate of Castleton University. This work was presented in 2011 as his senior thesis in History. A significant part of his research was accomplished at the Rutland Historical Society. Today Colin is a school behavioral specialist in Winooski, Vermont.

Introduction

According to *The American Heritage Dictionary* irony is defined as the use of words to convey a meaning opposite to its literal meaning. In this paper, instead of words it would be actions that produced irony. It would be the actions that followed the colonization of Liberia that would characterize a man's life. This man struggled to escape his past, but his past unfortunately caught up with him.

This is a biographical look at a man named Martin Freeman who provided an eyewitness account of colonization and how it brought oppression to the indigenous Liberian population. Freeman was born and raised in Rutland, Vermont, in the 1820s and moved to Pittsburgh twenty years later. He became a black nationalist in Pittsburgh, where he recognized the dangers of racism to himself, to his people, and to his family. After making an attempt to emigrate to western Canada, he became affiliated with the American Colonization Society or ACS. The ACS began colonizing Liberia before Freeman's birth and immediately started to mistreat the natives. Once Freeman got to Liberia, he was ecstatic to help his fellow African Americans gain a higher education. He was hoping to escape racism by moving to Liberia, but as years went by his dreams of a non-racist society started to diminish. Martin Freeman became distressed at how Liberia had developed a prejudiced society like the United States, but that did not stop his attempt to change it. Freeman was ahead of his time because he instituted higher education not just for his fellow African Americans, but also for African men and women. Colonization of Liberia strangled Liberian natives' religion, culture, and land which made them inferior to the American settlers who wanted to escape oppression.

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Martin H. Freeman And His Life At Liberia College: A Study In Irony

By Colin Alfred

Martin Freeman was born on September 11th, 1826, and raised in Rutland, Vermont.[1] Being born in Vermont gave him a big advantage over the majority of African Americans in the U.S., because as a resident of the state he was free. When he was a child he was heavily influenced by a man named Rev. Mitchell, who was Freeman's pastor at the East Parish Congregational Church of Rutland. Rev. Mitchell noticed young Freeman's precocious nature and offered to tutor him in hopes of getting him into college. Rev. Mitchell advised Freeman until he was eighteen and assisted him in preparing to enroll at Middlebury College. At the age of nineteen, Freeman gained admission to that college and continued there until he graduated in 1849. He was elected class salutatorian for his four years of excellent academic performance.[2] In April 1850, Freeman accepted an invitation to teach at the newly established black college, Allegheny Institute, later called Avery College, in Pittsburgh at the age of twenty four.[3] He was the first black professor holding an advanced degree at the collegiate level in America. Middlebury College awarded him a Master of Arts degree in 1852 for his work in the field of mathematics and science.[4] Freeman eventually moved to Liberia and taught at Liberia College, where he finally became president, and this has led him to be known to a few scholars.[5]

Russell Irvine wrote a biography of Martin Freeman and pointed out that he noticed oppression for the first time when he moved to Pittsburgh. "Freeman more clearly came to understand the ubiquity and depth of American racism," wrote Irvine.[6] He had never dealt with the extremes of racism growing up because he lived in Vermont, which had abolished slavery before it even became a state. In Vermont, Freeman, had little exposure to the bigotry and injustice that plagued many Afri-

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[1] Russell W. Irvine,"Martin H. Freeman of Rutland, America's First Black College Professor and Pioneering Black Social Activist," Rutland Historical Society Quarterly 26, No 3 (1996), p. 71.
[2] Ibid., p. 72.
[3] Ibid., p. 71.
[4] Ibid., p. 73.
[5] Ibid., pp. 93-96.
[6] Ibid., p. 77.

can Americans in much of the rest of the country. Charles Dew's book, *Apostles of Disunion*, spoke about how important slavery and white supremacy were for slave holders in the South. Slavery was important to them because it was their whole economy.[7] Southern whites had a great fear of losing slaves because it could lead to their losing their freedoms, property, culture, and their lives.[8] This paranoia in the South and some parts of the North created stronger oppression of African Americans. Pittsburgh opened up Martin Freeman's eyes to racism in America and prejudice towards his family.

In 1850 Pittsburgh, Freeman's life was profoundly changed because he experienced firsthand the oppression of his people. That understanding introduced him to the principles of Black Nationalism, which was a movement blacks tried in which to create their own society since they believed they could not advance or survive in a white society. Martin Freeman wrote a letter in America on this view and said, "Life, within the limits prescribed for the Negro in this country, is not worth living."[9]

Black Nationalist ideas demanded equal education for African Americans, the overall destruction of slavery, and establishment of their own nation so they could empower black people independently from whites. Black nationalists fought for, believed in, and advocated ideas to help their fellow race. They wanted to end white supremacy because it degraded them and their fellow African Americans.

Black Nationalist theories were formed by African Americans, including Martin Delany, Dr. David Jones Peck, Martin Freeman, and many others. Racism was the biggest issue for these men, but unfortunately Delany and Freeman did not expect racism to ever disappear in the States. They both believed bigotry would never cease in America because there were massive numbers of white Americans who believed African Americans to be inferior. Freeman believed in the reality of this tyranny because he wrote, "The very presence of this mighty civilization in which the negro is so completely hidden is oppressive."[10] Racism existed in all classes in American societies from poor to rich and blue

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[7] Charles Dew, *Apostles of Disunion* (Charlottesville: University of Press, 2002), p. 75.

[8] Ibid., p. 75.

[9] "Documents Related to the Life and Times of Martin Henry Freeman, M.A., Professor and President of Liberia College: A Nineteenth Century Black Educator" – a typescript by Russell W. Irvine, Georgia State University, 1996, Freeman to Braman, October 18, 1887, pp. 74-75.

[10] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Tracy, October 17, 1867, p. 20.

collar to white collar. One white collar man named Dr. John H. Van Evrie was one of the people who believed blacks were naturally inferior to whites. He was quoted as saying, "The Negro brain in its totality is ten to fifteen percent less than that of the Caucasian, and therefore in the sum total of mental power, the Negro is vastly inferior to the white man."[11] This kind of thinking made Freeman and Delany believe that America could never change.

Delany and Freeman postulated that equal education for African Americans might help them become more than second class citizens. African Americans who had a vigorous academic background, like Martin Freeman, could better their lives. Unfortunately, there were not many colleges, or schools, for free African Americans to attend. The main reason was higher education for African Americans barely existed because of segregation in a white American society. Segregation made American Blacks second-class citizens by denying them equal access to education.

African Americans could not access education, so some black nationalists, like Delany and Freeman, believed emigration was the best solution. A historian named Livingston, who wrote about Liberia College in his article, "The Exportation of American Higher Education to West Africa: Liberia College, 1850-1900," argued that African Americans struggled to access higher education in America, and, as a result, the nationalists supported emigration. Livingston wrote, "They only urged the possible extension of higher education to American Blacks with the hope that their enlightenment would make them so discontented with the country that they would emigrate."[12] Freeman believed that African Americans had no sense of pride because of slavery and that caused lack of education. In one of his letters, which he wrote to Joseph Tracy on December 1, 1863, he said "My own people are alone culpable in this matter, or rather slavery that terrible system that has crushed the manhood and manly aspirations almost completely out of the American Negro, is to be blamed for it all."[13]

Racism created a lack of education for free African Americans which fueled the idea of emigration for Freeman, Delany, and others. Martin

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[11] Victor Ullman, *The Beginnings of Black Nationalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 123.

[12] Thomas W. Livingston, "The Exportation of American Higher Education to West Africa: Liberia College, 1850-1900," The Journal of Negro History 45, No. 3 (Spring 1976), p. 247.

[13] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Tracy, December 1, 1863, p. 10.

Delany believed that Canada could be an oasis for African Americans. He saw Canada as a place for his fellow people to be free. Delany noticed how progressive Canada was in equal treatment because Canada allowed black officers to serve in militias and blacks to run in elections. Martin Delany also noticed there were many job opportunities for African Americans to acquire in western Canada such as working on the railroad, mining, shipping, building, and other service jobs.[14] Like the U.S., western Canada during the mid-nineteenth century was expanding because of ideas of Manifest Destiny. Martin Freeman was apparently interested in emigrating to Canada because he bought fifty acres of land there, and eventually sold it when he was in Liberia.[15] Freeman and Delany thought this would be an immense place for their fellow people to get a new start and leave slavery, discrimination, and the idea of race behind. This was not the first time Black Nationalists tried to emigrate.

Before Canada, Haiti was the first oasis for African Americans. Haiti was a French colony that went through a profound revolution during this time. The slaves revolted against the French and won, so Haiti became the first, "black ruled dominion."[16] Black Northerners, according to historian Sara Fanning, observed the revolution with pride because they witnessed the death of slavery in a slave holding country.[17] Thirteen thousand African Americans migrated to Haiti to avoid American society because slavery was abolished, blacks dominated the political scene, and equality was established throughout the nation.[18] Regrettably, a majority of the 13,000 Northern blacks returned to America because the colony was still in shambles. The main purpose of emigration for Black Nationalists was to escape the oppression of the United States and find equality for their common people. These two attempts seemed like an impeccable idea. Sadly, the migration to Canada and Haiti deteriorated, but colonization of Liberia was the new passion before and after these efforts to emigrate for Black Nationalists.

The American Colonization Society and Black Nationalists banded together to send free African Americans to settle in Liberia throughout

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[14] Livingston p. 130.

[15] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Tracy, October 30, 1867, pp. 22-23.

[16] Sara C. Fanning, "The Roots of Early Black Nationalism: Northern African Americans' Invocations of Haiti in the Early Nineteenth Century," Slavery and Abolition No.1 (April, 2007) pp. 61-85.

[17] Ibid., p. 61.

[18] Ibid., p. 61.

the early 1800s. The ACS was led primarily by wealthy white men. Each state had a Colonization Society. The members of the organization were powerful and well known figures, including the nephew of George Washington, Bushrod Washington, James Madison, James Monroe, and Francis Scott Key.[19] They had reasons to send free African Americans to Liberia. Some believed it would benefit the free blacks and others feared the possibility of a race war.

The idea of a race war came primarily out of the South. The majority of white Southerners believed they were superior to blacks. This gave them the right to own slaves because African Americans were supposed to be barbaric and inferior. Charles Dew stated Southerners had this fear of free African Americans who could rape their women and children and slaughter all the slave masters.[20] The South, especially South Carolina and Louisiana, supported sending free blacks to colonize Liberia because of this idea. A historian named Frankie Hutton mentioned how these two states feared the increase of black population. He wrote, "South Carolina is the state which is more particularly interested in the success of the Colonization Society than any other State in the Union, except perhaps Louisiana as these are the only two states in which the slave population exceeds the whites."[21] Hutton disputed that the fear of the growing black population from whites aided the movement.[22] Sara Fanning, another historian, agreed and asserted that there was a strong push by the ACS to expel African Americans from the United States. According to Fanning and Hutton, the ACS included terrified rich white people who completely wanted to get rid of the free blacks. The majority of Maryland and Virginia Society members were slave holders. In Maryland, slave holders noticed that the free black population increased by 45,000 in the span of forty years.[23] Virginia slave holders saw a big increase in free African Americans too, but what scared the slave holders were men like John Brown and Nat Turner. John Brown was an extreme abolitionist who tried to fire up a slave revolt at Harper's Ferry, but ultimately failed. In 1831, Nat Turner started a slave rebellion, and

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[19] PBS, *Liberia: America's Stepchild*, p. 1.

[20] Charles Dew, *Apostles of Disunion*, p. 80.

[21] Frankie Hutton, "Economic Considerations in the American Colonization Society's Early Effort to Emigrate Free Blacks to Liberia, 1816-36" The Journal of Negro History 68, No.4 (Autumn, 1983), p. 379.

[22] Ibid. p. 378.

[23] Katherine Harris, *African and American Values Liberia and West Africa* (Maryland: University Press of America, 1985), p.38.

that frightened a majority of Virginians.[24] These two states strongly encouraged the ACS by trying to pass laws for free blacks to acquire money for emigration. These laws passed in Maryland, but failed in the Virginia Senate by a small margin.[25] Slave revolts or race wars were in the back of many Southern ACS members' minds. Other ACS members, like Joseph Tracy, Freeman's friend, wanted free African Americans to escape America's oppression. The themes of a race war, abolition of the slave trade, and helping free blacks escape racism fueled the ACS to push for colonialism in Liberia.

The Society developed the idea of sending free African Americans to Liberia early in the 1800s. The first attempt was in 1818 when they sent two representatives to Africa to acquire land from aboriginals.[26] These representatives failed to bargain with the Natives and their ruler King Peter, and later that year both representatives died because of sickness. In December of 1821, the Society sent out Dr. Ayres and Dr. Stockton. These two were able to obtain land by using forceful tactics. Stockton and Ayres offered gifts to King Peter but he refused. They decided to pay a visit to King Peter. Stockton and Ayres pulled out their pistols and pointed at the King. They forced him to bargain. The Americans were able to attain Cape Montserado, the majority of King Peter's land, by trading him a net value of 300 dollars-worth of clothes, beads, tobacco, guns, and gun powder.[27] This kind of beginning created a hostile environment. Immediately after acquiring the land, settlers had to defend their colony. King Peter and eight other tribal chiefs combined forces to attack the Americans. They had roughly around eight hundred men. On November 22, 1822, they assailed the settlers, but the Americans prevailed. King Peter attacked again a year later, but experienced utter defeat.[28] As Liberia kept growing, so did the population, and so did the heavy influence of Christian faith on the settlement.

Freeman and thousands of African Americans who supported the ACS were all devoted Christians. The people who emigrated were supposed to spread Christianity to the "Dark Continent," so it could be

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[24] Ibid., pp. 40 - 41.
[25] Ibid., pp. 39 - 41.
[26] Jones Amos Beyan, *The American Colonization Society and the Creation of the Liberian State* (Maryland: University Press of America, 1991) p. 58.
[27] Ibid., pp. 65 -66.
[28] Ibid., pp. 67-68.

civilized.[29] Western religion dominated the social values and behavior in the settlement. Christianity was the face of American religion in Liberia, especially when the colony progressively grew in the 1800s. The reason was the variety of church establishments. There were the Methodist Episcopal Church, which had 2,700 followers, Cap Mount and Cape Palmas which had 38 schools and 18 boarding schools combined: the Baptist Church, Episcopal Church, and others.[30] This kind of presence dominated the cultural scene and the society. The Liberian government believed the territory was a religious colony.[31] Christianity was so influential, the first president of the country made his inaugural speech about the almighty establishing the colony and blessing them, and spreading the gospel to the barbarous nations of this country to civilize them.[32] This theme followed one after another with other inaugural speeches of presidents that followed.[33] The strong hold religion had on Liberia set the foundations in the newly developed country when Freeman, a Christian, was in love with Liberia.

Discrimination fueled Martin Freeman's desire to leave America and bring his family. He believed that no matter what struggles he endured in Liberia, it would be worth it not to live in America and have his children deal with racism. Freeman wrote primarily to Joseph Tracy. Tracy was the secretary of the Massachusetts Colonization Society and was a friend of Freeman for a quarter of a century. In one of his letters to Tracy, he mentioned that his daughter dealt with the idea of racism. He wrote, "My little girl is imbibing ideas in regard to color and race, which I did hope she would never learn."[34] His daughter was very young and this greatly disturbed him.[35] This idea that his children might grow up in America and might learn about racism made him tremble, because he feared that his offspring would not respond to America's bigotry and slavery very well. He did not want his children to grow up and see slavery. Freeman's hatred toward American society's prejudice was so profound that he would rather have his children struggle to survive in Liberia than live generously in the States. "And though I would rather my little ones should be left to starve in Liberia than be brought back

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[29] Ibid., p. 62.
[30] Ibid., pp. 150-151.
[31] Ibid., p. 152.
[32] Ibid., p. 157.
[33] Ibid., p. 157.
[34] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Tracy, August 1, 1864, pp.15-16.
[35] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Tracy, August 1,1864, pp.15-16.

here to be clothed in purple and fine linen and fare every day," wrote Freeman while in the U.S.[36] His family was the primary reason for fleeing to a different country and to better his children's lives.

Freeman already adored Liberia even before he arrived there. He was so excited to go back to his, "fatherland," that in his letters before he left the U.S., he kept saying how superb Liberia was going to be. In one letter, after he missed a chance of going, he wrote, "to make another effort to reach Liberia - - - land of the free, and land of my hope!"[37] Freeman loved the idea of Liberia because he wanted to escape America. America had no hope for him, his family, and his fellow people, but Liberia was something new and was ready to be molded into a non-racist society. Once Freeman made it to Liberia he was excited and so grateful to be there. In a letter to Joseph Tracy, he said how happy he was there and that he had never been happier before: "I have never been happy until I made Liberia my home. Not even in my childhood, does my recollection recall a time when I was not aware of my true status as a Negro in this country."[38] Martin Freeman really put his emotions and eagerness into Liberia for the hope of a better life for himself, his family, and other African Americans. He really believed that Liberia could save his people because Liberia had saved him from America's oppression.

On November 31 [30], 1864, Freeman landed in Liberia. He was overjoyed that he had finally reached his destination. For the first time, he officially called himself a man. In his letter he wrote to Joseph Tracy he said, "I am a man for the first time in my life invested with all the rights, privileges, duties, and immunities that pertain to manhood."[39] Liberia gave him so much hope because he felt like he had escaped oppression. Liberia had a college for African American immigrants, and that excited Freeman because he could teach them. This college was so close and dear to his heart that Freeman wrote that he would do anything for Liberia College: "I am willing to give everything I have: health, life, and comforts for the interest of Liberia College."[40] He felt like Liberia would educate and better serve free African Americans. He hoped education could assist to create a non-oppressive society in Liberia. His

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[36] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Tracy, November 25, 1867, pp. 26 - 27.
[37] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Tracy, January 30 1864, pp. 10 - 11.
[38] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Tracy, October 17, 1867, 19 - 21.
[39] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Tracy, November 31 [30], 1864, 17 -18.
[40] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Tracy, April 15, 1868 p. 31.

first impressions of his colleagues were very favorable. He declared that President Roberts, "surpassed my expectations in gentlemanly," and Professor Blyden was, "a classic scholar," and Professor Crummell was, "well versed in his department."[41] Lastly, in the letter, Freeman wrote, "I am proud and thankful to associate with such men."[42] Freeman's thought of teaching at the college made him feel great about himself. He felt like he was doing a lot of good for Liberia. He wrote, "I feel that I have secured a great good for education in Liberia."[43] This feeling of Freeman working in the college not only benefitted the college, but he called his work there "for the ultimate benefit of myself."[44] Martin Freeman was willing to do anything to keep the school open. The college had low admission rates, especially through difficult times. One letter he sent to Tracy explained the admission rate and he wrote, "The third term accordingly began with nine students, two of whom have since died."[45] He wanted the college to stay open even through the hard times because he loved to labor away for the idea of the Liberia college, Liberia, and Africa. He was so dedicated to the college and Africa that he remarked, "If Africa doesn't want the efforts of my brain, she shall have the labor of my hands for I'd rather be a day laborer or struggling for a base subsistence here, than to live in ease and comfort in the U.S."[46] This passion fueled Freeman to devote his time and money to the college. When he came back to America for medical visits, he would travel around U.S. schools to buy textbooks, encyclopedias, lab materials and other scholarly supplies. He paid out of his own pocket. This was not Freeman's job to buy these scholarly materials, it was the American Colonization Society's responsibility to purchase them.[47] He did this because of his devotion to Liberia and its foundations.

Freeman thought he could love every bit of Liberia even though he knew it was going to be a struggle to live there. He wrote to the Board of Trustees of Donations, "come death or life, famine or feasting; the worst

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[41] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Tracy, November 31 [30], 1864, pp. 17 – 18.
[42] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Tracy, November 31 [30], 1864, pp 17 – 18.
[43] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Tracy, April 6, 1868, pp. 29 – 30.
[44] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Tracy, April 6, 1868, pp. 29 – 30.
[45] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Tracy, December 1868, pp. 34 - 35.
[46] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Tracy, November 20, 1868, pp. 32 - 33.
[47] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Tracy, April 25, 1868, p. 32.

conditions in Liberia are (to me) preferable to the best here."[48] He had his own, "little farm," to grow food for his family who lived in a, "16x12 log house on the farm."[49] He and his family had to struggle through fever, malaria, famines, and attacks from the indigenous people.

However Freeman's belief that he had escaped oppression by being in Liberia did not last forever. Between the years of 1870 and 1880 no letters written by him could be found. During this decade, his opinion of Liberia dramatically changed. Freeman thought he had bypassed racism by going to Liberia, but after a ten year gap he wrote about bigotry in Liberia. Not having his letters for this period of time makes it difficult to postulate when, where, why, and how his new impressions of Liberia developed. All that is known is that in the 1880s he was dealing with oppression in Liberia.

On August 2, 1880, Freeman noticed a familiar pattern of oppression. He wrote about the hatred that was focused on the native people by the Americo-Liberians and biracial people. In the letter, he said how Liberian society was no different than that of the South. Martin Freeman wrote to his long-time Rutland friend, Charlotte Chaffee, expressing his feeling. Charlotte was a childhood friend he deeply trusted all through his life. He would write differently to her than he would to Joseph Tracy, because Tracy dealt with the Massachusetts Colonization Society and the business aspect Liberia. Since Charlotte was always a close friend, he ended up writing about his passion to her instead of expressing his thought as he did with Joseph Tracy. Freeman wrote, "The civilization of Liberia is, of course, the civilization of the old slave South, in so far as this, that we have copied our former masters."[50] He spoke about how a mulatto man shot and killed a native man in cold blood, and there were no consequences for the murderer. He compared it to a white Southerner killing an African American: "Killing a Native by a Liberian is not murder here, just as killing a Negro by a white was not murder in the South."[51] Freeman noticed the indigenous people were second class citizens. Livingston mentioned how the mulattos would call the natives "savages," and how they felt they were superior to the

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[48] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Board of Trustees of Donations, March 2, 1868, pp. 28 - 29.

[49] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Braman, September 30, 1881, pp. 51 - 52.

[50] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Chaffee, August 2, 1880, pp. 45 – 50.

[51] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Chaffee, August 2, 1880, pp. 45 – 50.

natives and newly immigrated African Americans. He said, "near white replaced white as the badge of a social elite."[52]

The first presidents of Liberia were all close to white.[53] The political structure was not fair either because the natives were shunned while control was in the hands of the mulattoes and African Americans. This meant the natives could not acquire a western education or any other form of benefit that the elites had.[54] Martin Freeman wrote how every one of African descent valued himself according to his degree of white blood. White blood in Liberia's society was so important that young black men would marry mulatto women that were a social class below them in order to be a little bit whiter. This infuriated Freeman so much that he made his own hypothesis on why oppression was happening. He wrote, "Colored man has been hated and despised so long and so intensely in the land of his exile, that he has come to hate and despise himself. More especially it is the case that the mulatto hates and despises the pure Negro."[55] In America there was only one race that dominated and oppressed, but in Liberia there were two races that dominated and oppressed the natives. The indigenous were worse than second class citizens, because they were third class citizens in Liberia.

The natives did try to resolve issues with the government. Martin Freeman wrote to Charlotte Chaffee and said, "The college building was full to overflowing with native Africans from about 200 miles in the interior, called to Monrovia to confer with our Government in regards to matters of importance to them." Freeman noted the beauty of a "Group of native Africans, stalwart of limbs, finely proportioned in every curve and line of their beautiful black forms."[56] Unfortunately, the Liberian government did not see the beauty that Freeman saw in aboriginal Africans. The government disregarded the natives. He quoted the government as, "everyone so ready to ignore the rights of others, if they stand in the way of our self-interest."[57] The inhabitants were just pushed into the interior and overlooked while the colony kept growing. Liberia was

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[52] Thomas W. Livingston, "The Exportation of American Higher Education to West Africa: Liberia College, 1850-1900," The Journal of Negro History 45, No. 3 (Summer 1976), p. 249.

[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Chaffee, August 2, 1880, pp. 45 – 50.

[56] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Chaffee, January 6, 1884, pp. 57 – 59.

[57] Irvine – "Documents", Freeman to Chaffee, August 2, 1880, pp. 45 - 50.

hope for people to escape oppression, but colonialism did not allow that to happen.

The colonization of Liberia was supposed to help a group of people escape oppression and create a society in which one group would not dominate another. According to Livingston, this vision did not come true. The pioneers of colonizing Liberia did not want the natives to be part of their society. "Pioneers did not see the new state expanding through incorporating indigenous Africans, but rather through the further emigration of American and West Indian Negroes," he wrote. Beyan's book spoke about how the first two representatives of the ACS in 1818 felt superior to the natives. One was named Mills, and he described the African natives as, "only children of a larger growth, and would hope by a temporary conformity, gradually to wean them from their vicious customs."[59] He also mentioned how their music was monotonous, and how their villages were places of darkness.[60] From the beginning of Liberia the indigenous culture was dismissed.

This excluded aborigines from the newly developed society of Liberia. The colonists discarded the natives' religion and culture because they did not fit Western views. Multiple authors spoke about native Africans as uncivilized if they were not Christian. Liberia's oppressive society evolved throughout the nineteenth century as the settlement grew.

A member of the New York Colonization Society, William Tracy, wrote to another member about how to use the natives; to exploit them by teaching them that hard labor was a moral thing. He wrote, "And a great object to teach them labor is honorable. I am satisfied that labor of the pupils of a proper institution could furnish all the food required by preparing coffee plantations to become in a few years productive of sufficient revenue to sustain, wholly or almost wholly, the institution."[61]

Unfortunately for Freeman, he did not get to live in a non-racist society in which everyone was equal. He was aging rapidly and very sick

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[58] Thomas W. Livingston, "The Exportation of American Higher Education to West Africa: Liberia College, 1850-1900," The Journal of Negro History 45, No. 3 (Summer,1976), p. 250.

[59] Amos Jones Beyan, *The American Colonization Society and the Creation of the Liberian State*, p. 58.

[60] Ibid., p. 58.

[61] Irvine – "Documents", William Tracy to Emmory Wasburn, October 15, 1875, pp. 43 - 44.

the last ten years of his life. He wrote about his health and said, "I shall be sixty years old if I see September 11, but until my recent illness I have been as active as any man in Monrovia."[62] That is when he noticed the oppression of the indigenous people and the class system. His health was too weak for him to wrestle towards a non- segregated society and fight the elites.

This does not mean all hope was lost for Martin Freeman and his hope to see equality in Liberia. Freeman did some remarkable good as President of Liberia College. He admitted his fellow brothers and aboriginals in the college, so they could get an equal education. He urged a couple of indigenous and African Americans to extend their compassion and their education to native Africans. He wrote, "Turner is going to Sincoe County to teach among the natives. He goes without salary and receives such support as he may get from the people among whom he labors. He seems a good and godly young man...."[63]

The outstanding thing was Freeman accepted women. In his early career, he wrote to Joseph Tracy, "There is indeed urgent need of some system of female education in Liberia."[64] He believed this because he noticed that the majority of young women at the age of sixteen could not even read an ordinary newspaper. This confused Freeman, because Liberia needed a stronger education system to help develop itself as a country, and women's education could help that. Martin Freeman believed the government should allow all people who were in poverty, "mental or moral education." Freeman wanted women to be accepted in the college, but also wished to establish high schools to solve the problem of minimum women's education.[65] Twenty years later, he informed the Board of Trustees of Liberia College that, "Mrs. Jennie Sharp, reports she has had names of twenty pupils enrolled," and he went on to say they were, "bright young scholars," and "become women of ability and usefulness."[66] Women were given the same education as men. The college was teaching these ladies important topics, such as spelling,

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[62] Irvine – "Documents", Martin Freeman to Samson, June 24,1886, pp. 66 – 67.

[63] Irvine – "Documents", Martin Freeman to G.W. Samson, February 25. 1885, pp. 60 - 62 .

[64] Irvine – "Documents", Martin Freeman to Joseph Tracy, November 20, 1867, pp. 25 – 26..

[65] Irvine – "Documents", Martin Freeman to Joseph Tracy, November 20, 1867, 25 – 26.

[66] Irvine – "Documents" Martin Freeman to The Board of Trustees of Liberia College, November 30, 1886, pp. 69 – 71.

math, geography, botany, and history. Freeman did his best to fight against the oppressive society by giving his fellow people and native Africans an education.

Martin Freeman had so much hope for Liberia. He believed that Liberia would help him escape racism. He felt as though Liberia was a second chance to make sure oppression would not exist in his society. Unfortunately, he saw tyranny in full force in Liberia. His dreams of an equal and just society would forever be dreams, because, realistically, oppression will happen to any group of people who are being colonized. Apparently he was not completely devastated by what was happening in Liberia, because he chose to be buried there. His wife wrote that "he had chosen Africa for his field and there he wanted to be buried."[67] He did leave behind a spectacular legacy of attempting to create a non-oppressive society by offering education to people who were considered second class citizens.

Martin Freeman's letters to his friends and colleagues for almost thirty years give a powerful insight into colonization and the oppression that followed. Freeman was a man who feared racism, especially towards his family. He began to understand Black Nationalism's theories by learning from Martin Delany, while in Pittsburgh. After making an attempt to emigrate to western Canada, he became affiliated with the ACS. The ACS began colonizing Liberia before Freeman's birth and immediately began to have problems with the natives. Once Freeman arrived in Liberia, he wholeheartedly devoted himself to his mission of helping fellow African Americans gain self-realization, respect and freedom primarily through education. But Martin was also sympathetic to the natives. He prayed he could escape racism by moving to Liberia, but, as years went by, his dreams of a non-racist society would dwindle. He witnessed how Liberia developed into a prejudiced society much like America, yet that heartbreaking reality did not stop his will to change it. Freeman's character was ahead of his time because he created higher education not just for his fellow African-Americans, but also for natives and women. Colonization of Liberia strangled Liberian natives' religion, culture, and land, seeing them as inferior to the American settlers who wanted to escape oppression. That is the definition of irony.

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[67] Irvine – "Documents" Louisa E. Freeman to J.C. Braman, July 26, 1889, pp. 85 - 86.